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Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ "Steady deterioration" of situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, according to Sadako Ogata, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; says that "in absence of peace, international relief effort can not be sustained for long".

+ Some 34 Vietnamese settlers are killed and 29 injured in armed attack in Cambodia; Secretary-General's Special Representative for Cambodia says local authorities must bring to justice guilty parties.

+ Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, opening third coordination meeting on Somalia in Addis Ababa, calls for $166.5 million in assistance to fund 1993 rehabilitation programme for Somalia

+ Government of Rwanda and Rwandese Patriotic Front agree on cease-fire, effective 9 March, and on resumption of peace talks.

+ Fifth Committee approves $140 million for United Nations Operation in Mozambique for period ending 30 June.

+ World Food Programme to expand its current relief operation in southern Nepal to feed 85,000 refugees from Bhutan for period of six months.

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Sadako Ogata, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), today told the Security Council that the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina was steadily deteriorating and that in the absence of peace, international relief effort could "not be sustained for long, at least not in its present form".

Mrs. Ogata, who made her statement to the Council behind closed doors, said that 2.28 million people, or half of the original population in Bosnia and Herzegovina, were at present beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance from the UNHCR. That was more than two thirds of those having remained inside the country, she said. The number of people receiving assistance in the whole of

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former Yugoslavia was now 3.8 million, up from 500,000 in December 1991, when UNCHR began operating in the region.

Mrs. Ogata told Council members that her biggest concern remained humanitarian access to the victims, especially to the Government-held enclaves in eastern Bosnia where access had in many instances been denied altogether. During the past few weeks only half of the targeted 8,000 tonnes per week of humanitarian supplies had been delivered, symbolizing the increasing use of prohibition of relief as a weapon of war and "ethnic cleansing". She welcomed the American air drops which were relieving the suffering in the eastern part of Bosnia. However, she said, that type of assistance could not become a substitute for access by land.

Mrs. Ogata said the enormous suffering and devastation in the former Yugoslavia underscored the critical importance of an immediate cessation of hostilities. Although a prolonged emergency situation could be expected, she asked the Security Council to reaffirm the right of return for refugees and displaced persons, not only to their country but also to their places of residence, once the conflict has ended.

In a related development, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali met this morning with an emissary from Pope John Paul II, who handed over to the Secretary-General a letter from the Pope.

According to a United Nations spokesman, the letter expressed the concern of the Pontiff for the tragedy afflicting the people in Bosnia and Herzegovina and appealed to the United Nations to do its utmost to find a peaceful settlement to the conflict.

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Some 34 Vietnamese settlers were killed and 29 others injured when an unidentified armed group attacked a floating village with AK-47 rifles in Cambodia, last night, according to the spokesman for the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), Eric Falt.

The group had entered five different houseboats in the fishing village located just south of the provincial capital of Siem Reap and shot the people living there. Three of the injured were Cambodians, the spokesman said, while all the other dead and injured were Vietnamese-speaking men, women and children, who were living in four different houseboats.

The Secretary-General's Special Representative for Cambodia, Yasushi Akashi, in a statement called the act "appalling" and said it was the latest in a series of bloody and murderous assaults by bands of armed men against unarmed civilians, often in their sleep UNTAC would "strongly" press the local authorities to track down the perpetrators and to bring the guilty parties to justice. In that regard, UNTAC would assist the authorities, he added.

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Mr. Akashi said UNTAC would continue its efforts to establish the facts of foreign presence in the country. The distinction between the foreign forces, as provided for in the Paris Agreements, and foreign residents and immigrants, was clear, he said. It was also obvious that people born in Cambodia of foreign descent fell into a separate category.

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Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Jan Eliasson, opening the third coordination meeting on humanitarian assistance to Somalia in Addis Ababa today, has called for $166.5 million in assistance for Somalia to fund projects put together by different United Nations agencies.

According to a United Nations spokesman today, the three major areas for which funding is sought are: the rebuilding of key Somali institutions and civil administration, promotion of livestock and agricultural output and the reintegration of nearly a quarter of the Somali population who have become refugees abroad.

Meanwhile, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Sadako Ogata, told the Security Council today that a "semblance of normalcy" was beginning to return to the city of Bardera in Somalia, but the "encouraging signs" were offset by new disturbances in Mogadishu and Kismayo.

The "physical and material security" would be a crucial element in the return of some 300,000 of the more than one million Somali refugees who had fled to Kenya and other countries neighbouring Somalia, she said. Some 35,000 refugees had already returned from Kenya to Ethiopia since the UNHCR began its repatriation programme about two months ago.

She also noted that the return of Somali refugees could accelerate in about 3 to 6 months, provided adequate security arrangements existed on the Kenya-Somalia border and in Somalia.

With regard to the situation in Togo, Mrs. Ogata said recent developments there had caused an exodus of more than 200,000 refugees into neighbouring Bénin and Ghana, with the influx continuing at a daily rate of 1,000 persons.

The Security Council also heard a briefing by Margaret Anstee, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Angola, on the situation in that country and on the mandate of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM II).

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The Government of Rwanda and the Rwandese Patriotic Front, at a high-level meeting in Dar-es-Salaam, have agreed to a cease-fire, effective 9 March, and on the resumption of the peace talks. The two parties met from 5 to 7 March under the auspices of the Prime Minister and First Vice-President of Tansania and adopted a joint declaration reaffirming their commitment to a negotiated settlement within the framework of the Arusha negotiations.

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In a joint communiqué, submitted to the Secretary-General by the Permanent Mission of Rwanda to the United Nations, the parties said they had agreed that foreign troops shall withdraw and be replaced by a neutral international force under the auspices of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

The resumption of the Arusha negotiations on the outstanding issues will take place on 15 March and are expected to be completed within three weeks, when a Peace Agreement would be signed.

Meanwhile, addressing the Human Rights Commission in Geneva on Monday 8 March, the Minister for Primary and Secondary Education of Rwanda, Agatha Uwilingiyimana, said the international community must respond urgently to widespread fighting, human rights abuses, and the basic needs of over 1 million displaced persons in Rwanda. She charged that reactionary forces had interfered with the agreement reached by the two parties, adding that Rwanda's only hope was to reach a political settlement through democratic means.

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The Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) has asked the General Assembly to appropriate $140 million for the financing of the United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ), for the period from 15 October 1992 to 30 June 1993. That amount also includes an earlier commitment authorization of $9.5 million.

Under the draft text adopted by the Committee yesterday, the Assembly would further request that the Secretary-General submit a report by 1 July on revised and detailed cost estimates for the Operation for its entire mandate period, which ends on 31 October, 1993.

The Committee also discussed the question of providing commitment authorizations for the continued maintenance of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM II) and the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) from 1 March 1993.

The Committee will meet again tomorrow to take action on draft resolutions concerning the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) and the United Nations Observer Group in Central America (ONUCA).

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The World Food Programme (WFP) announced today in Rome that it would expand its current relief operation in southern Nepal to feed 85,000 refugees from Bhutan for a period of six months.

The aid will consist of 8,000 tonnes of basic foods to cover the needs of the refugees from April to September and of a contribution to a supplementary feeding programme for about 16,000 children under the age of six.

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By January 1993, the number of Bhutanese fleeing civil unrest in their country had reached 77,000 and, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), refugees continue to arrive in Nepal at a rate of 3,000 per month. Their number might increase up to 110,000 by the end of 1993, the WFP said.

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